Discussion of Soviet Troop Reduction In East Germany May Be Trial Balloon

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BONN, June 20 — Recent reports from Moscow and East Berlin that five Soviet divisions may be withdrawn soon from East Germany are thought here to be the result of kite flying by the Soviet government aimed at discovering if there is a readiness within NATO to talk about a mutal thinning out of troops in Europe.

Another possible reason, put forward by U.S. Ambassador-at-Large Llewellyn Thompson, who is at present in West Germany, is that the Russians see little sense in keeping 20 divisions in East Germany at a time when there is a great shortage of skilled technical labor at home.

According to the West German newspaper "Diewelt" today, Moscow wishes to reinforce its troops on the Chinese border. The defense ministers of the Warsaw Pact countries, said the paper in a report from Moscow, have recently discussed the "possibilities of a military conflict between the Soviet Union and China". The Russians reportedly have, 39 divisions stationed in Central Asia and on the southern border of Siberia.

The Soviet proposals for a European peace unity conference also might well have some connection with the prospect of Moscow wishing to withdraw some troops from East Germany, officials here believe.

Soviet Intervention In Talks Suspected

BERLIN, June 20 (AP)—Political circles in West Berlin think the Russians may have intervened to prevent the proposed political debates between the West German Socialists and the East German Communists.

The debates are scheduled to open July 14 but talks to arrange the details have been suspended. Mayor Willy Brandt, who heads the Socialist Party and the West Berlin city government, says the next move is up to the Communists.

One informant close to Brandt's government says the belief that the Russians may have taken a hand is based on reports that Soviet diplomats in East Berlin said the debates would not take place.

There was speculation that the Soviets felt an open airing of the Socialist viewpoint in East Germany might increase liberal trends in other East European countries, notably Rumania.

Earlier, after the West German Socialists picked up the challenge to debate from East German leader Walter Ulbricht, some Western observers believed the Russians were behind the idea. Their reasoning was that the Russians felt they would be the gainers if the debates became an issue between the Socialists and West Germany's ruling Christian Democrats.

The Christian Democrats grudgingly agreed to a bill exempting the Communist debaters from arrest in West Germany as representatives of a regime responsible for the killing of would-be refugees at the border.